

Revelations by ChunkMonk

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Summary:

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Instead she had been given a top notch tutor—paid for by Hawkins Lab of course—and Hopper had said it was possible she could attend the following year, but made no promises. Mike had taken it pretty hard at first, but didn't put up a fight. He'd known it was useless, and the two had focused on enjoying whatever time they had together.

That had not been fun for Will to watch—the hand holding and shy smiles—but the saving grace out of the situation was that at least there would be none of that mushy stuff during school hours."

Revelations

Author's Note:

a little bit of violence at the end but super brief and not exceptionally detailed or anything

It felt like only yesterday that Will was in kindergarten, meeting Mike on the swings, and living a simple life, free from parallel universes and monsters and worries over his own sexuality. Now he was in high school and a million miles away from that life, even if geographically he was just across the street. The rest of the summer had passed by in a blur; the group had spent as much as they could together, like they knew that things could change in the fall, and it had been one of the best summers of Will's life. By the time September rolled around, they'd found out that El wouldn't be joining them, as she was too far behind, and that had put a damper on things.

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That had not been fun for Will to watch—the hand holding and shy smiles—but the saving grace out of the situation was that at least there would be none of that mushy stuff during school hours.

“Everyone is so....tall.” Will managed to get out as he craned his neck, hoping to see past the sea of people around him.

“Don’t worry, you’ll hit your own growth spurt like I did. Just give it time.” Jonathan assured him as he walked with Will towards his locker.

It was his last year at Hawkins High and it was nice to have him around for Will’s first. It was a relief actually. High school was a whole new world, with new faces and new rules, and Will felt like it could swallow him whole. It was terrifying in a completely different

way than the Upside Down, but had rattled him just as hard.

His Mom had done the best she could to calm him, and she'd sent Will off in the morning with a watery smile and a brown bag lunch, blubbering on about how he was "so grown up". She'd been so emotional that all he'd wanted to do was make her proud, even if he would have rather turned tail and hid in his bedroom till his eighteenth birthday.

Jonathan's first period class was on the other end of the building but he'd insisted that it was more important he stick by Will's side, at least until he'd gotten the hang of things, and herded him around like a border collie. The halls there were much larger, more crowded, and he'd felt even more like a child among men. A group of ten or so guys wearing letterman jackets hustled past them, paying Will no mind, and almost ran him over in the process. He flattened himself to his locker to avoid being squished and shot Jonathan a look of pure terror.

"Did you see that?" He squeaked, turning around to fumble with his lock, his hands trembling. "Junior high wasn't exactly a piece of cake, but at least I never had to worry about turning into roadkill."

Jonathan frowned. "Yeah, the jocks pretty much think they own this school, and they wouldn't be wrong. Just keep an eye out and remember if you need me, I am only a hall away." He leaned up against the next locker and studied the paper Will had given him earlier. "This says your homeroom is with Mr. Riconetti in room 105. Word of advice? Stay as far back from him as you can, he permanently smells like garlic."

Will laughed. "Good thing I'm not a vampire."

Jonathan smiled his warm, big brother smile. The smile that he gave every time he was about to build Will up with a pep talk, and placed a comforting hand on his shoulder. "You're gonna do great. First days are always hell, but this place isn't so bad. It's not much different than middle school, besides the fact that some of your classmates are now shaving and driving."

Will shoved a stack of textbooks into his backpack and laughed. "Oh

God, can you imagine when Dustin starts shaving? We thought him getting his teeth was bad!"

"Check out these pearls." Jonathan rubbed his chin proudly. "These black pearls, rwwwwwaar."

"Stop!" Will playfully shoved at him.

"Alright, alright. Speaking of Dustin, where's the rest of the group? You have any classes together?"

"Um, I have homeroom with Lucas, and then later I have biology with Mike, but we don't have many classes together unfortunately." Will frowned; he'd been pretty bummed to discover that most of his classes were without his friends, and was already dreading finding someone to talk to who wouldn't look at him like some sort of oddity. The 'zombie boy' nickname had pretty much died at the end of the following school year, giving Will something of his anonymity back, but he'd never been able to make friends easily, and someone was always bound to think he was strange or, worse case scenario, throw a queer slur or two at him.

It was just something he'd come to expect.

Will was bent over his back pack, fiddling with the zipper, when the bell rang and Jonathan shot him a pained look.

"I have to go." He said, looking for all the world like it was the last thing he wanted to do. "That rings a second time and you're not in class you get a tardy."

Will nodded.

"You covered for lunch?"

Will nodded again, the nerves in his belly firing to life. He had lunch period with his friends, thank God, because the idea of him having to sit alone was not how he'd wanted to start off the year. Once you were the 'weird kid who eats alone' you were always the 'weird kid who eats alone'.

"You got this Will. You got this, and then in four years you can blow

this town and come join me in New York, okay?" Jonathan said, taking a few steps backwards. He held up four fingers and silently mouthed the word 'four' before turning on his heel and bolting down the hall. Will slammed his locker shut and peeled the opposite way towards his homeroom, positively nauseous.

As the days flew by, Will was struck with how different the atmosphere was in high school. You were not exactly treated like an adult, but there was a bigger sense of freedom, and definitely more responsibility. The first day jitters had slowly given way to an easy truce with his nerves. He could even classify the situation as good, if he dared to test fate. His classes were challenging but interesting, his art teacher enthusiastic and supportive of his talent, so much as saying he was a shoo-in for the winter art show, and there hadn't been a single slur tossed his way.

Will came to the conclusion that high school was a bigger pond, so his brand of fish didn't stand out as much.

He was sure it didn't hurt that some of his fellow classmates didn't even recognize him at first, what with his new look and all. Even though the clothes were nothing more than Jonathan's hand me downs, they were clean and well cared for and not too out of style, and combined with his new 'do, the overall effect wasn't too bad. Not bad at all. He even managed to get his fair share of appreciative looks and comments....unfortunately they were all from girls. Not that he'd expected any different. Still though, for once he didn't feel like a total freak.

If anyone had really changed over the summer though, it was Mike. Dustin and Lucas had both gotten a bit taller, and in Dustin's case, a bit broader, but it was Mike who'd shot up like a weed into a somewhat ganglier, but no less handsome version of himself. Yes, puberty had so far been kind to Mike Wheeler, and everyone seemed to take notice. He was aware of the girls in the hallways as they moved in great herds, gossiping and giggling over all the boys and how Mike was now considered something of a catch. Will even overheard junior and senior girls in the lunch line, saying Mike was "cute for a freshman".

He was cute for any grade, he thought.

Will hadn't dared to think about what Steve had suggested—that Mike liked him like that. He'd tried to think about it over the summer, to wonder if it was really possible for Mike to be like him, but every time he'd started to imagine that scenario, his brain would shut down. Will Byers was absolutely incapable of believing that Mike Wheeler would ever—could ever—be that way. No, it was safer to believe that Steve was just wrong (a victim of all that styling product finally going to his head) and shove it away.

Besides, Mike was with El, and if that didn't work out, then apparently he had a shot with every girl at school. He'd probably start dating cheerleaders or something. It was fine. It was how it was supposed to be.

Will rolled his eyes as he sat down at their lunch table and unwrapped his sandwich; he was being ridiculous, he knew it, but this new environment, plus the onslaught of raging teenage hormones, seemed to make everyone a bit ridiculous. He'd learned quickly that high school was nothing more than increased homework followed by increased drama.

Lucas and Max were currently in the midst of some argument about God knows what, that had them giving each other the cold shoulder, Dustin was in a funk over a sudden case of stubborn acne and Mike....well Mike had been slightly off for a while now, sullen and withdrawn, and it was just getting worse as the days went by. Something was clearly bothering him, and Will just didn't know what.

The first time he'd noticed it was a week ago, when he was talking to the blonde girl at the locker next to him, discussing their English assignment. Her name was Jenny, and she was nice, pretty (if you were into that sort of thing) and had actually wanted to talk to him in class, so they'd struck up some sort of friendship. Mike had appeared out of nowhere and his eyes had been so sharp they could have cut glass. He'd been rather short with her, which was unlike him, pulling Will away and saying they'd need to hurry up or they'd be late for biology. Ever since then he'd just gotten moodier and sometimes Will would sense his eyes on him, though every time he'd

looked up, Mike would be looking away. Had he done something to upset him? Did...did he know? How Will felt?

The thought was enough to turn his stomach. He choked down a bite of his bologna sandwich just as the rest of the gang dropped into their seats; Lucas and Max seemed to be back on good terms again, the redhead gave him a nod, and Mike sat across from him, barely making eye contact.

Dustin hit Will in the back of his head with his lunch bag and grinned down at him, unaware of Will's emotional turmoil. "You haven't touched your pudding cup yet, you wanna trade for a Twinkie?"

A few weeks had passed, the air grew colder and crisp, and the buzz in the school surrounding Homecoming was deafening. It was a big deal at Hawkins High; their football team was one of the best in the state, and the game always attracted big crowds. The dance held afterwards was seen as something as a rite of passage for all freshman, and Will had overheard the girls in his class talking about it endlessly. Who they were going to ask, what they were going to wear. It was enough to drive him crazy.

That afternoon Will found respite from Homecoming mania, situated inside the AV room with Dustin and Mike. It was small, cluttered, and covered in a fine layer of dust, and Dustin had graciously volunteered them to take time after school to clean and organize it.

Dustin was busy shuffling around a row of television carts, trying to make room for all of them, while Mike flipped open a few box tops, staring listlessly at the contents inside. Will had just rolled up his sleeves, ready to get to work, when Lucas and Max walked in the door.

"Glad you finally decided to show up." Dustin said, dumping an ancient box onto the floor and watching as a plume of dust rose up from it. "I thought we'd be stuck sorting out this shit all by ourselves."

"I told you we were going to be late." Lucas said, hand clenched in Max's as they wandered into the room. 'We were—"

"We were making out behind the bleachers." Max finished for him, smiling proudly, as she hopped up on the edge of the desk."

"Ew, too much information!" Will laughed, throwing a rag at them.

Dustin rolled his eyes, muttering something about 'unpleasant visuals' but Will knew that Lucas being with Max was still hard for him. He'd mostly gotten over it, but there were moments when Will could see Dustin struggling.

"So this place is a dump." Max looked around the room, taking in the mess. "I guess less people care about the AV Club here than in middle school. I didn't think that was possible. What are we doing here again?"

"We told Mr. Lassiter that we would sort out all the film strips, reorganize the shelves and clean the projectors." Dustin answered.

"And why exactly did you volunteer to do this again?"

"For popularity. Obviously." Dustin deadpanned, chucking a handful of broken slides into the trash. "We're nerds Max, in case you hadn't noticed. This is what we do. This is what we know."

Lucas started digging around on a shelf. "Also he told us he'd bring in this killer telescope to mess around with. This thing is crazy good and costs more than a car or something."

Max looked unimpressed. "That's cool, I guess." She hopped off the corner of the desk and started to poke around. She ran a finger along the edge of a shelf and it came back black from dust. Her nose scrunched. "You're just lucky I like you Sinclair."

The group worked together for an hour and a half, each one of them working perfectly in tandem with each other, lifting and hauling and rearranging everything that had been packed away in the tiny room. Will guessed the place had been used as some sort of overflow storage for the drama club, as they'd come across two boxes of costumes shoved in the corner.

“Check me out.” Dustin grinned, pulling out a wig with blonde ringlets and putting it on his head. “Aren’t I pretty?”

“Pretty terrifying.” Will snorted

“Oh, swords!” Dustin had bent down again to rummage around and pulled out a plastic pirate sword. “By the power of Greyskull, I... am...He-man!!” He cried out and Will heard Mike groan. “Heads up!” Dustin said, pulling a matching one from the box and tossing it to Lucas. “En garde!”

“Prepare to die!” Lucas lunged forward, and the two clashed their weapons together, the plastic making a pitiful sound. They play battled for a few minutes in the small space, knocking into the shelves and sending a pile of videotapes crashing to the ground.

“Guys, can we not? I don’t wanna be here all day and you’re acting like children!” Mike snapped.

Dustin lowered his sword. “And what’s crawled up your butt lately?”

“Nothing’s crawled up my butt.”

“Yes something has.” Said Lucas, scrutinizing him closely. “Everyone’s noticed. Haven’t they?”

“You have been a little testy.” Max chimed in, and they all looked at Will to reply.

Will took a steadyng breath. “You have been pretty...different lately. You don’t seem like yourself.” He said quietly.

“Good to know everyone’s been talking about me. Just great.” Mike grumbled and threw his rag into the garbage can.

“Oh, I know what this is.” Lucas said, and pointed an accusing finger at him. “Girl problems. Classic girl problems. It’s all in the eyes....kinda glazed over and dead.”

“You think girls give guys dead eyes?!?” Max scoffed, crossing her arms.

“Sometimes.” Lucas nodded. “Like, oh I don’t know, when your girlfriend says you were supposed to meet her at the arcade at seven but you distinctly remember nine and she proceeds to make a big deal out of nothing and.....”

“We went over this! I said seven!”

“You said nine!”

“It’s not girl problems.” Mike said through clenched teeth.

Will wasn’t sure why he said it, but it had tumbled out of his mouth before he’d given it a second thought. “You and El are fine then?” Will didn’t look at him, instead focusing all too hard on his half assed job of wiping off one of the projectors, but Will swore he saw him flinch.

“What? Yea. Why wouldn’t we be fine?”

Dustin took a seat on a box and wiped the sweat under the brim of his hat. “You two didn’t break up did you?”

Will’s breath caught in his throat and Mike stilled, scrunching up his nose like he always did when he was confused. “We were never going out.”

That definitely caught Will’s attention.

“But...but the Snow Ball!” Came out of Will’s mouth before he could stop himself. The inner part of him, the part he kept tightly locked away, began to hope. It was dangerous.

“Yea, and you two were inseparable all summer. When Hopper actually let her out of the house.” Lucas said, moving closer as if he was a bloodhound on the scent. “You spent all of August making googly eyes at each other!”

“Plus you two have that whole...Romeo and Juliet, star-crossed-lovers vibe going on.” Dustin added, punctuating his words with a few flicks of his sword.

Mike’s nose scrunched even more. “Our what?!”

“You know.” Lucas made a face. He crossed his arms, running his hands up and down his shoulders as if caught in an embrace, and fluttered his eyelashes. “Oh, El I miss you so much and all I can think about is you, so I’m going to mope my mopey ass around for a year because I want to kiss you.” Everyone laughed and Lucas dropped his hands and shook his head. “So you finally get El back and you wont even ask her to be your girlfriend? Didn’t think you’d wuss out like that man.”

Mike looked like he’d sucked on a lemon and was glaring daggers at the whole room. “I’m not wussing out. It’s just....it’s complicated.”

“Like Lois Lane and Superman.” Dustin interjected, more interested in his sword than the conversation. When the room all paused to look at him for clarification, he rolled his eyes as if it was obvious. “It’s hard to have a relationship with someone who has a great destiny and awesome super powers.”

Mike’s right eye started to twitch.

“I don’t see how it’s complicated. You like her, you ask her out. It’s pretty simple.” Lucas needled him.

“Can we not talk about this anymore?”

“True love is dead. I don’t know what to believe anymore.” Dustin muttered to himself.

“I said drop it!”

Before Will even had a second to process this new information, there was a soft rapping on the door, and everyone looked at the same time, as if choreographed, at the petite blonde standing in the doorway, her eyes darting around the room until they’d found their target.

“Hey Will, I was looking for you.” She smiled, wide and friendly, and oblivious to the whole room staring at her.

“Guys this is Jenny. She’s in my English class. Jenny this is... everyone.” A chorus of half hearted greetings followed.

She took a few timid steps into the room. “You said earlier that you would be in here after school and I...uh, thought maybe it would be fun to join and stuff. So I came to check it out.” She looked directly at Will, and then looked away quickly, her cheeks tinted pink.

Suddenly Will felt strange, but he couldn’t put his finger on why. He didn’t remember telling her where he would be after school, but he’d probably forgotten. It was nice she’d stopped by though he supposed.

There was a clatter from the corner where Dustin had dropped his sword. “Wait, girls are allowed to join the AV Club?!”

Lucas sounded just as shocked. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen a girl in the AV room before.”

Max hit his arm. “Hey! What am I?!”

“You’re not a girl, you’re a member of the party.” Dustin said, waving her off, and she looked momentarily confused before biting back a smile. Mike however, was scowling.

Well, that was the nice word for it. If Will was being honest, he looked more like a Looney Tunes character right before steam shot out of their ears.

As if sensing the hostility, Jenny took a step back and her smile grew tight at the corners. “Well, I have to be going but I...uh...just wanted to stop in. Say hi. I’ll see you in class.” She said to Will, before leaving, and cast him one last lingering look. As soon as she was gone the room was a flurry of activity again.

“That was unexpected.”

“First the El shocker and now this...”

“I wonder if she’ll actually join? Would be cool to have another girl in here.”

“I’m sure she’ll join if Will has a say.”

Everyone looked at Mike; his arms were crossed and he was staring at the empty doorway.

“What does that mean?” Will asked. There was that funny feeling in his stomach again, like everyone was in on some secret that he was not.

“Nothing.” Mike puffed out a breath. “Are we done here yet?”

Max grabbed Lucas’ arm and looked down at his watch. “Shit, I didn’t know it was that late. I gotta jet. If my chores aren’t done before my parents get home, I’m screwed.”

“Hey, where are you going?!?” Dustin yelled as Lucas moved to follow her. “You said you would help!?”

“I didn’t volunteer us!”

“No, but you were more than fine with getting to use the teacher’s ‘awesome’ telescope.”

“Yep, but Max is awesomer.” He grabbed her hand. “So, I’d rather ride home with her. Later.”

Dustin looked at Mike expectantly, and his silent question was answered a moment later when Mike stalked off towards the door, following them.

“E tu Brute.” Dustin shook his head. “Who knew getting a girlfriend would make you so unreliable. Make you shirk your responsibilities.”

Will sighed. “It’s alright. I think this place is about as good as it’s gonna get.” He was lying; the place was still a mess.

Dustin didn’t seem to hear him though, and continued sulking. “Liking girls is the worst. You’re just lucky you don’t have to worry about that.”

Will froze; for a second he was sure the earth had stopped spinning on its axis. “What?” He squeaked.

“No girlfriends, no girlfriend drama. You and me are lucky we don’t have to deal with that shit.”

“Oh, right.”

Will did his best to keep the sadness from his voice; little did he know that Will had his own brand of shit to worry with, and it was ten times worse than anything Dustin could dream of, especially since he couldn't actually talk about his shit with anyone. Boy did he need to talk about his shit, especially after today.

Well, there was one person Will could talk to. He had given Will his phone number 'in case of emergencies' and he wondered, did this qualify?

It took him less than a minute to decide that, yes, it did qualify.

If Jonathan knew that Will had become close to Steve Harrington, he didn't let on. It was an awkward situation really, and a part of him felt guilty for confiding in Steve something he hadn't even told his brother. It's not like he didn't want to tell Jonathan—he did—but it was easier this way. No matter how much he liked Steve, and how easy he was to talk to, his brother's good opinion would always mean more, and that made the idea of telling him that much more terrifying.

Will knew he'd do it eventually.

That Saturday afternoon had found him with Steve once again, this time by design. Will had called him the night before, asking if he would want to meet up to talk, and he'd agreed to meet him at the Midview Mall over by Loch Nora, which was considered the 'nice mall' and had a food court with an Orange Julius and everything. Will had told Jonathan that he was going to hang out with the guys, and had biked all the way out there, even though he'd be in big trouble if his Mom found out.

"So what's up?" Steve asked, setting down his burger after a long period of them eating in comfortable silence. They had found a somewhat quiet section of the food court, away from the roving gangs of teenagers that tended to congregate there on the weekend.

Will played with the straw of his milkshake while he spilled his guts to a patient, intently listening Steve. He furrowed his brow and

nodded at all the right points, and punctuated the more dramatic parts of Will's story with 'I know' and 'oh, really?' and managed to look genuinely surprised when Will got to the part where Mike and El had never been a couple at all.

"First of all, Mike and the girl, I did not see that coming. Second of all, he's jealous."

"What?"

Steve looked at him like he was slow. "From what you've just told me, his bad mood, his weird behavior towards that Jessica—"

"Jenny."

"Right, that Jenny girl. He sounds like he's totally jealous."

Will was confused. That didn't sound right at all. "Jealous? Of what? Why would he....what is he jealous of....I haven't....there's not...."

"Of course you wouldn't see it." Steve laughed. "That Jenny girl likes you. It's obvious."

Will flushed; that weird feeling that had been in the pit of his stomach in the AV room was back. So that's why he'd felt uncomfortable when Jenny smiled at him.

"It is?"

"Totally. And Mike is jealous. It's classic."

"How so?"

"He's all weird around her, right?"

"Yeah."

"His shitty mood started the day you were talking to her at your locker?"

"Yes but...." And then it finally clicked. Holy crap! Mike was jealous. The idea sounded strange, like a foreign language, and a bit insane.

Was it possible that all this time he'd been brushing it off, that Steve had been right all along?

"I see the lights finally turning on there." Steve smirked, taking a sip of his drink before wadding up his napkin and throwing it into the remnants of his value meal.

"But why?" Was all Will could get out, even though a million questions were running through his mind.

"Because he likes you, ya doofus."

"What...what should I do?"

Steve shrugged. "Tell him that you like him." He answered, like it was the most natural thing in the world. There was something refreshing about Steve treating the situation like it was no big deal, that a guy liking another guy was entirely normal.

Will wished the rest of the world was as cool as Steve Harrington.

"I can't. It's too risky."

"With great risks come great rewards." Steve said sagely. "Isn't that something Batman used to say?"

Will snorted into his straw. "It's 'with great power comes great responsibility' and it was Uncle Ben who said it."

"The guy from the rice boxes?"

"Uh, no. Spider-Man." Will simply stared and Steve waved it off.

"Doesn't matter, the point is, he's jealous, he likes you, he's not dating the girl with the freaky mind powers, so make a move."

Will sighed. "That's easy for you to say. You're straight and I'm..." he trailed off. It was on the tip of his tongue, but it didn't come out. "...not like you." He finished lamely. "If I do that, not knowing for sure that Mike is....like me....then I risk a lot more than just being turned down. I risk losing my best friend and getting my face bashed in." He grimaced, remembering some of his bullies more colorful taunts.

"You know Mike's not like that. He was worried sick during all that," Steve dropped his voice and leaned closer. "Mind flayer shit."

"I know. But that's because he's my friend, and it's normal for friends to worry. That's it."

"You really can't see it? Can you?" Steve was examining him closely now, his eyes soft.

"Can't see what?"

"The way he looks at you. Now I've only seen a bit here and there, but he couldn't stop staring at you that night we played D&D..."

Will picked at his food. "I had a new look, that's all. Anyone would have stared."

Steve frowned. "We gotta work on your confidence kiddo. Look, I wouldn't be saying this if I didn't see it. I'm not out here trying to mess up your life, but when I see Mike look at you, I see how Jonathan used to look at Nancy, back when we were together. That's how I knew he liked her and well, that's how I know this. And yea that feels really shitty to admit and I am gonna need some sort of award here for being the bigger person." He looked over his shoulder towards the Mrs. Fields store where a woman in a smock was handing out samples. "Maybe one of those giant cookies?"

Will laughed. "So if I...umm...decide to...do something...and I'm not saying I would, but if I did, what should I...do?"

Steve looked thoughtful for a moment. "I imagine its the same as telling a girl you like her so I would just, you know, ask him out."

"Ask him out?"

"Yea, on a date."

"A date?"

"You do know what a date is?"

Will dropped his voice. "I'm gay not stupid." Oh shit. He instantly

was red in the face. He hadn't meant to say it at all, let alone like that. Shouldn't the moment have more....gravitas? Should it just be casually thrown out like that? Steve didn't say anything, but Will swore he saw the corner of his mouth twitch upwards and there was a proud gleam in his eyes.

"Relax, I'm kidding. What about Homecoming? That's soon right?"

Will stared at him like he'd grown another head. "The dance? Are you insane? I couldn't invite him to the dance. Two guys at homecoming...dancing....together? We'd be run out of town!"

Steve's face grew hard. "I'd like to see them try. I still have that bat in my trunk."

Will didn't know how to respond to that, so he didn't. There was a sudden lull in the conversation, and Steve picked at his cold fries while Will sucked on his straw, trying to make sense of all of this. Mike liking him. Asking him to the dance. It was overwhelming, and scary, and exciting, and good and Will really, really wanted it to be true, and the idea that he could actually have a slice of what other normal teenagers had was hard to imagine.

But when he did imagine it—it was amazing.

"Hey Steve?" Will broke the silence after a few minutes; it was starting to get dark out and they'd have to leave soon so he could get home before his Mom was done with her shift.

"Hmm?"

"How can...how can Mike like me and like El too?"

Steve shrugged. "Some people like both. Bisexual or something like that it's called."

"Both." It was not a question. He let it sit with him for a moment before he asked. "That's a real thing?"

Steve stood up to throw his garbage in the trash and Will followed. "Yep. I heard Bowie was."

“Really?” His eyes grew wide with that revelation and Steve nodded. If Will had ever needed some sort of sign that Steve was right and this was ok and everything would work out in the end, it was this. He positively vibrated with excitement as they left the mall.

The next Friday after school Will waited outside the back door, the one next to the biology room where Mike was making up a test, and adjacent to the bike rack he always used. Will saw his bike there, chained up, and ready it or not, he was finally going to talk to Mike, confront him over what had ‘crawled up his butt’, and if Will was brave enough, tell him some of his own secrets as well. He had to try.

He leaned up against the wall, reading the graffiti that had been etched into the brick by years of students; it had been scrubbed at mercilessly, but most of it remained, and he was busy trying to decipher the name to ‘call for a good time’ when he felt a violent shove to his right shoulder.

“Oh, looky what we have here. The little fairy. The little queer.” It was Troy, and he was sneering down at him. He was alone, beefier than Will last remembered, but he hadn’t seen much of him lately, which had been nice. Troy was in special classes, ones set aside for students they knew had no academic future, but needed a bare bones education before they went on to some sort of trade, and their paths rarely crossed anymore. Will had just started to think his days of being bullied were over, but apparently he was wrong.

“Leave me alone!” Will did his best to sound fierce, but his body instinctively curled in on himself.

“I think people like you are a waste of space.” Another shoulder shove. “My Dad says people like you go to hell, the way you go around, looking at us guys all funny like.”

“Trust me, I would never look at you!” The way he said ‘you’ was dripping with disgust, and Will was shocked at himself. Where had that come from? It felt...good.

Troy’s left eyebrow rose. “What did you say?!”

Before Will could even see it coming, his face met with a large, meaty fist, and his world went blurry and dark at the edges. He felt himself sliding down the wall, sinking without much resistance until he met the ground. His head was throbbing and everything was....spinning....and the last coherent memory he had before he passed out was shouting, the sounds of a scuffle, and warm, gentle hands on his face.

To Be Continued....

(Oh a cliffhanger! I am so mean lol)